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Research and Analysis Branch

Western European Section

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SCANDINAVIA

~~Situation Report No. 12~~

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September 30, 1942

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SUMMARY

Recent developments in each of the northern countries suggest that the war of nerves may be going against the Nazis. This in turn can affect German control of the military resources and supply routes on which the Nazis must depend if they are to have any means of disrupting the northern Allied convoy route to Russia.

RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SCANDINAVIA

INTRODUCTION

If, as now seems probable, the Nazis have to end a second summer without a military decision on the eastern front, they can be expected to intensify their concern with the northern supply route to Archangel and Murmansk. As Autumn comes on, the Allies will exploit the advantages of longer nights and increased foggy weather; and already, there is evident a new tempo in the operations. Within a week, Berlin has claimed the sinking of most of a 45-ship convoy off northern Norway, and the sinking of a ship of a westward bound convoy by U-boats operating between Spitzbergen and Iceland. In both cases, Berlin's claims may turn out to be very much exaggerated; yet they remind us that operations in the northern waters are likely to increase. Minister Eden has announced that the aforementioned Russia-bound convoy had an escort of no less than 75 naval vessels.

The Nazi Command, therefore, has some reason for taking fresh stock of its general position in Scandinavia. How, for instance, does it now estimate the political and ideological fronts in the northern countries? We may get some answer by treating briefly of recent developments in each country.

Justice at Copenhagen.1/ If true, this would explain why Buhl went out of his way to identify the concern of his government with the interests of the German Wehrmacht.

That the Danish Cabinet has reason to be concerned over this issue is clear, if we recall the status of the country. Denmark is an occupied, but not a conquered country. When the Germans took possession on April 9, 1940, their government gave solemn assurances that "the Danish people's freedom (would be) respected and the country's future independence fully guaranteed."2/ It appears that no formal agreement was signed at this time between German and Danish authorities;3/ but King Christian and the Danish government undertook on the basis of the German promise, to refrain from armed resistance against the German forces. Within the framework of the German obligation, the Danish government undertook to carry on its functions with as large a degree of autonomy as circumstances might allow. Control of foreign affairs was denied it, and it was severely hampered in matters of trade and many economic matters. Yet, the governmental structure remained formally intact; von Renthe-Fink is still the German Minister accredited to Copenhagen.

To the average Dane, it is important that his country is as yet merely occupied. He deals with his own government officials, not with the German occupying authorities. His government still stands ready -- exceptions are as yet only sporadic -- to protect his rights as an individual. It can do this so long as the Danish police system and the Danish penal code remains substantially intact. Any autonomous government in Denmark worthy of the name must guard the integrity of these functions to the very end (with the realization that here, perhaps, is the central distinction between the democratic and the totalitarian system).

Yet, as indicated above, there have been encroachments. The Germans, in spite of the promises on the day of invasion, have interfered even in matters of police and justice. They have secured certain changes in the penal code so as to improve the chances for their own safety; they have helped to place in office a Minister of Justice, Thune-Jacobsen, who is certainly not hostile to many of their plans. The Danish authorities are keenly aware of the dangers and they have sought zealously, and so far with much success, to keep

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I. DENMARK

At first glance, Denmark seems quite dissociated from the northern convoy route. Nevertheless, German authorities have to reckon with it. The transit of war materials to the far north, direct to Norway or indirectly by way of Sweden, must now go, in no small degree, across Denmark. As train ferry services between Denmark, Sweden and Germany are progressively curtailed, an increasing load is thrust upon the Danish railways and the shipping services, plying between northern Denmark and southern Norway. Then, too, it must be remembered that various firms, albeit under duress, are producing supplies for the German Wehrmacht.

A. The Problem of Sabotage

This autumn, the German concern in Denmark is with sabotage. Since midsummer, sabotage has noticeably increased.1/ The Danish government itself has grown concerned. Prime Minister Buhl made a plea over the radio on September 2, which, instead of being reassuring, left in Danish circles a wake of uneasiness.

Buhl defined sabotage as "the damage or destruction of values that are of importance for a warring power." It includes not only the destruction of war materials but also acts which disrupt communications, or which might "diminish or eliminate the productive means of civil life." It is "one of the worst acts that can be committed against a warring power." Buhl made it clear that he felt forced to speak thus because of recent incidents affecting the interests of the German Wehrmacht. Sabotage and misdemeanors committed against it, he promised, would be prosecuted by his government with maximum severity. To leaders of Danish youth he appealed especially, asking that they impress upon their followers the need for avoiding impulsive actions which might harm the country. He hoped to avoid a situation which might cast doubt on the adequacy of the Danish penal law.2/

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II. SWEDEN

German relations with Sweden have recently been none too good. In July, the negotiations over a new trade agreement led to no satisfactory result. In August, the Swedish press demanded a purge of alleged Nazi elements in police and army circles. As a result of official investigations, several army officers were shifted to less pivotal positions or were dismissed outright. Among the latter, the most conspicuous was Sven Lindholm, reputed to be a friend of Goering.

As might next be expected, Berlin began a fresh series of complaints about the Swedish press. The latter was criticized on September 2 for its comment on the war's third anniversary; unlike the Axis-controlled press, the Swedish media were not predicting German victory. A week later, the Swedish press was called unneutral by a spokesman at the Wilhelmstrasse, because two correspondents in a group of several Swedish newspapermen on tour in England had spoken well of the R.A.F.1/ Swedes in Berlin quickly pointed out that these opinions had not yet appeared in Swedish papers. The Wilhelmstrasse spokesman replied that the statements have been given to Reuters and then published in England. Dienst aus Deutschland continued to carry the original statement without modification.2/

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More serious were the charges that Sweden was harboring Communism. A couple of days before he complained of the press, the Wilhelmstrasse spokesman charged that Sweden had become the active Comintern central in Europe; and that, too, at a time when European nations were shedding their blood in the crusade against Bolshevism.3/ A Transocean broadcast gave this wide currency. The day before the provincial elections in Sweden, the Berliner Boersenzeitung charged that the recent trials for sabotage showed that Sweden was becoming a center for Communist and British sabotage and espionage.4/ The day after the Swedish elections, which disclosed some Communist gains (discussed below), a Berlin broadcast commented that such a result had been foreseen for some time; it added that Communist activities in Sweden would have to be "carefully watched by European powers fighting against the common bolshevik enemy." Bolshevism, the speaker warned, "has been able to

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the occupation forces from dealing directly with Danish citizens. In a number of cases, they have anticipated events and subjected Danish citizens to the jurisdiction of their own police and courts in order to forestall action by German military authorities and the Gestapo.

This, however, is a slippery policy. By degrees, it may lead to full collaboration. No Danish government can follow that path to the end and remain in power. Somewhere along the way, it must call a halt and step aside, either in favor of a Nazi commissar or of a handful of extremely unpopular Danish Nazis. The Buhl government knows this, and the Prime Minister's speech is good evidence that it recognizes the importance of not letting the Danish police and courts be used by the Nazis. It is possible that the present government is willing to let this issue be the test of its continuance in office.

in scope, but they did show that one democracy still functions and does so, uncomfortably close to Berlin. They indicated that Sweden's voters, by and large, support the government's policy of neutrality and that they might, in fact, prefer an even firmer tone in dealing with Germany. It is true, the Social Democrats -- still the leading party -- lost some seats to the Communists and to the Farmer's Union Party. The latter gained partly from a revised pre-election alliance and partly because some farmers were not satisfied with the government's price control policy.1/

The Communist gain was more significant as it was secured partly at the expense of Social Democrats and partly at the expense of Nazis. It was most pronounced in some cities where the food situation was difficult.2/ Doubtless, it registered also left wing dissatisfaction over the government's hesitancy in curtailing the Swedish Nazis. Young voters especially may have supplied a number of such protest votes; for the first time, the suffrage was lowered from 23 to 21 years.

The Swedish voters were determined to eliminate the Nazi elements, as an active factor, which meant in this election, to defeat Nils Flyg's "Socialister," the only Nazis to present candidates. Organised some years ago as a left-wing faction of the Social Democratic party, Flyg and his followers later became a Nazi group. They have now lost all of the three places formerly held in the six major municipal councils, and two of the three places formerly held in the provincial councils. Thus, Swedish Nazis now have but one of the 1,521 seats in the secondary assemblies which choose members of Sweden's upper chamber. This emphatic rejection of five out of six former Nazi members suggests that the Swedes place no very high estimate on Germany's chance for victory. For Berlin, this is an unpleasant setback to face on the ideological front at the outset of a new winter.

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2/ T., #2606, (Stockholm), September 22, 1942.

establish new bases in Sweden and tries to consolidate them by all means." Sweden, said the Wilhemstrasse spokesman, will some day find in her midst "a Swedish Kuusinen."1/

Phrases such as these, in the mouths of German spokesmen, have sometimes in the past proven ominous. They have foreshadowed invastions of new victims. The Germans can never rule out entirely the possibility of military action in Sweden. They are committed to the defense of northern Norway because of the convoy supply route. In the event of Allied landing operations, they would find the Swedish railways very useful -- especially the line along the Kattegat in the south and the Luleå-Narvik line in the north. Important, too, when the Baltic is frozen over, are the two trunk lines which connect the Luleå-Narvik line with the railway net in central Sweden. If the Allies, unable as yet to launch the major second front, chose to effect landings in Norway in order the better to secure the northern route (and cut off the Lapland iron ore supply), the Germans may find Swedish communications and facilities indispensable. Transocean recently quoted, with apparent approval, a Swedish colonel who pointed out possible Allied designs in northern Sweden, and referred also to Germany's tendency "to forestall others rather than to be forestalled herself."2/

The Swedes are fully aware of the German danger. Without forgetting the traditional enemy (Russia), they staged recent Swedish maneuvers in the south and west. Anti-landing maneuvers were held in the south, along the shores opposite Germany; large air maneuvers took place in the center and the west, opposite the German-controlled Norwegian border. An additional 55,000 men were recently called up to strengthen the active Swedish forces.

B. The Swedish Elections

There is a good chance, however, that the recent German complaints about the press and about Communism in Sweden are simply further moves in the ideological war (a German press attache at Stockholm was playing down the Communist significance of the election a few days later3/). From the Nazi standpoint, it is important that no weakness be revealed in the northern ideological front, especially as Finland seems to waver. Hence, the recent elections in Sweden were decidedly inconvenient; they were only provincial and municipal

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1/ T., #2607, September 22, 1942.

2/ The New York Times, September 27, 1942.

3/ T., #2644 (Stockholm), September 24, 1942.

needs some body to support his rule, in order that he may bring about a state of peace with Germany -- Norway and Germany are still formally at war. Thereupon, he may join the Anti-Comintern Pact and take his country into war with Russia.

Whatever the wider objectives, the plans for calling a Riksting have apparently miscarried. Nothing in the nature of such a body met on the anniversary day, September 25th (though the occasion was observed by four new British Mosquito planes, which punctuated with bombs a speech Quisling was making on the New Order). The effort to freeze union membership will surely fail, as laborers and employers alike desert their organizations. In letters of almost identical wording, resignations have been coming in en masse, prompted, in the case of labor, by the clandestine organ of the labor unions, Fri Fagbevegelse. Early reports say the number of resignations is up to 200,000, or well over one-half of the membership of the unions.1/ (In one quarter, this large figure had been seriously questioned).2/ The letters are surprisingly uniform; they complain of the rising cost of living, and they emphasize that the present union leadership is on the point of sending representatives to a projected Riksting. This exploitation of their membership the writers cannot approve; hence, they must resign.3/ Such a solid front of resistance should convince even Hitler that Quisling can never muster more than the tiniest fraction of Norwegians in favor of the New Order.

B. Friction Among the Nazis

There are reasons for believing that the German authorities have sought to restrain Quisling in his efforts to coordinate employers and labor, just as some weeks ago they seemed to be urging caution in the smoldering controversy with the bishops and the Church.4/ Heretofore, it has chiefly been General Falkenhorst who has objected to Quisling's procedures; now, there are indications that Reichskommissar Terboven as well finds himself at odds with the leader of Nasjonal Samling.5/

1/ Ukens Nyatt fra Norge, September 25, 1942.

2/ T., #2589 (Stockholm), September 21, 1942.

3/ T., #2559 (Stockholm), September 18, 1942

4/ Ukens Nytt fra Norge, September 3, 1942, pp. 2-3.

5/ Ibid., September 24, 1942, p. 3.

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III. NORWAY

A. Quisling Plans for a Riksting

Norwegians have good reason to remember the month of September with some trepidation. It was in that month in 1940 that the German authorities dissolved the Norwegian civil administration they had recognized in April, and entrusted the rule to Vidkun Quisling and his group. In 1941, September was the month in which Tarboven set about to intimidate the labor unions and other organized groups, by authorizing for some days a state of emergency and permitting a reign of terror and execution. This year, Norwegians were quite ready to believe reports that on September 25, the anniversary of his assumption of power two years ago, Quisling would assemble and launch a new governmental body, a Norwegian Riksting. Such a body might give him a new leverage with which to force his fellow countrymen under Hitler's yoke.

The plan was to assemble a Riksting ("Assembly of the Realm") made up of representatives of the various trade and professional groups, now mostly controlled by Quisling's men. This corporative parliament would take the place of the old Storting, which, with its party system and geographical representation, passed from the scene in 1940. The first move came on September 2, when Quisling promulgated a law giving the state the right to regulate organizations.1/ The law was applied quite specifically to labor unions and to employer's associations.2/ Continuance of membership in these organisations was made compulsory. Corporate dissolutions and individual resignations were held to be illegal. Dues were to be paid like taxes; for the workers, this meant they were deductible from wages. Violation of these regulations would entail a maximum of three years' imprisonment. With labor unions and professional groups thus brought into line, it would be possible to elect on a corporative basis a Riksting. This body might then give Quisling's power a stabler basis than Nazi bayonets on which to rest.

Ever since his accession to power two years ago, Quisling has striven to coordinate the professional and organized groups in order to present his German masters with some evidence that he is entitled to speak for an important bloc of Norwegian opinion. His assumption of the new office of Minister President on February 1, 1942, was a move in that direction. Quisling

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1/ News of Norway, September 25, 1942.

2/ Aftontidningen, September 11, 1942

Torboven may be eager to expand his own power as a sort of viceroy, and could thus do very well without Quisling. The latter's difficulties with members of his own party over their recruitment for military service on the Russian front may be not unwelcome to the German authorities. The latter would not hesitate to liquidate Quisling and his Nasjonal Samling if they decided it would be advantageous. Certainly, the recent visit to Norway of Wilhelm Stuckart, in charge of the Zentral Stelle fur Norwegen in the Ministry of Interior at Berlin, might bode no good. Stuckart, holding a similar office for Austria, had charge in 1938 of much of the detailed work of incorporating that country into the Reich.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Germans have good reason now to watch the ideological front in the Scandinavian North. That front has a bearing on Germany's ability to interfere with the northern convoy route. The nature of the front, however, varies from country to country. In Denmark, where a considerable range of autonomy is left, the issue of the season is sabotage and how to get the Danish government to deal vigorously enough with it. Norway, in some respects, presents an opposite problem. There, Nazi lackeys are in control and the German authorities are disinclined to face fresh troubles with the civilian population. Hence, they find it advisable to put a brake upon the zeal of the Quislingites. The recent return of veterans from the eastern front does not improve matters. Quisling survivors of the Nordland regiment are demanding important party posts, while returning members of the Fricorps Danmark have been greeted with a withering disdain by the loyal home front in Copenhagen.

In Sweden, which is still formally neutral, the problem is to hold democratic and Allied sympathies in check, and, so far as possible, to keep them inarticulate. In this contest the Nazis have lost a battle, as the recent Swedish elections show. Moreover, they may be on the verge of losing another of much larger dimensions in Finland. In their present extremity, the Finns cannot help but be influenced by the attitude of their neighbors to the west. Many Finns must be wondering about the sharp increase in the Swedish Communist vote. When Minister Procope, without special occasion for doing so, reiterates the claim that Finland's war objectives are strictly limited, and when the Finnish press anxiously inquires what Washington thinks of its country's position, Hitler may have reas on to be concered over such vacillation. If the ideological front should crumble for him in Finland, the military picture as well would soon change. The Germans might then face new difficulties in Denmark and Norway -- difficulties which could seriously interfere with their efforts to disrupt the northern Allied convoy route.

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2/ T., #2606, (Stockholm), September 22, 1942.

establish new bases in Sweden and tries to consolidate them by all means." Sweden, said the Wilhemstrasse spokesman, will some day find in her midst "a Swedish Kuusinen."1/

Phrases such as these, in the mouths of German spokesmen, have sometimes in the past proven ominous. They have foreshadowed invastions of new victims. The Germans can never rule out entirely the possibility of military action in Sweden. They are committed to the defense of northern Norway because of the convoy supply route. In the event of Allied landing operations, they would find the Swedish railways very useful -- especially the line along the Kattegat in the south and the Luleå-Narvik line in the north. Important, too, when the Baltic is frozen over, are the two trunk lines which connect the Luleå-Narvik line with the railway net in central Sweden. If the Allies, unable as yet to launch the major second front, chose to effect landings in Norway in order the better to secure the northern route (and cut off the Lapland iron ore supply), the Germans may find Swedish communications and facilities indispensable. Transocean recently quoted, with apparent approval, a Swedish colonel who pointed out possible Allied designs in northern Sweden, and referred also to Germany's tendency "to forestall others rather than to be forestalled herself."2/

The Swedes are fully aware of the German danger. Without forgetting the traditional enemy (Russia), they staged recent Swedish maneuvers in the south and west. Anti-landing maneuvers were held in the south, along the shores opposite Germany; large air maneuvers took place in the center and the west, opposite the German-controlled Norwegian border. An additional 55,000 men were recently called up to strengthen the active Swedish forces.

B. The Swedish Elections

There is a good chance, however, that the recent German complaints about the press and about Communism in Sweden are simply further moves in the ideological war (a German press attache at Stockholm was playing down the Communist significance of the election a few days later3/). From the Nazi standpoint, it is important that no weakness be revealed in the northern ideological front, especially as Finland seems to waver. Hence, the recent elections in Sweden were decidedly inconvenient; they were only provincial and municipal

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1/ T., #2607, September 22, 1942.

2/ The New York Times, September 27, 1942.

3/ T., #2644 (Stockholm), September 24, 1942.

needs some body to support his rule, in order that he may bring about a state of peace with Germany -- Norway and Germany are still formally at war. Thereupon, he may join the Anti-Comintern Pact and take his country into war with Russia.

Whatever the wider objectives, the plans for calling a Riksting have apparently miscarried. Nothing in the nature of such a body met on the anniversary day, September 25th (though the occasion was observed by four new British Mosquito planes, which punctuated with bombs a speech Quisling was making on the New Order). The effort to freeze union membership will surely fail, as laborers and employers alike desert their organizations. In letters of almost identical wording, resignations have been coming in en masse, prompted, in the case of labor, by the clandestine organ of the labor unions, Fri Fagbevegelse. Early reports say the number of resignations is up to 200,000, or well over one-half of the membership of the unions.1/ (In one quarter, this large figure had been seriously questioned).2/ The letters are surprisingly uniform; they complain of the rising cost of living, and they emphasize that the present union leadership is on the point of sending representatives to a projected Riksting. This exploitation of their membership the writers cannot approve; hence, they must resign.3/ Such a solid front of resistance should convince even Hitler that Quisling can never muster more than the tiniest fraction of Norwegians in favor of the New Order.

B. Friction Among the Nazis

There are reasons for believing that the German authorities have sought to restrain Quisling in his efforts to coordinate employers and labor, just as some weeks ago they seemed to be urging caution in the smoldering controversy with the bishops and the Church.4/ Heretofore, it has chiefly been General Falkenhorst who has objected to Quisling's procedures; now, there are indications that Reichskommissar Terboven as well finds himself at odds with the leader of Nasjonal Samling.5/

1/ Ukens Nyatt fra Norge, September 25, 1942.

2/ T., #2589 (Stockholm), September 21, 1942.

3/ T., #2559 (Stockholm), September 18, 1942

4/ Ukens Nytt fra Norge, September 3, 1942, pp. 2-3.

5/ Ibid., September 24, 1942, p. 3.

III. NORWAY

A. Quisling Plans for a Riksting

Norwegians have good reason to remember the month of September with some trepidation. It was in that month in 1940 that the German authorities dissolved the Norwegian civil administration they had recognized in April, and entrusted the rule to Vidkun Quisling and his group. In 1941, September was the month in which Tarboven set about to intimidate the labor unions and other organized groups, by authorizing for some days a state of emergency and permitting a reign of terror and execution. This year, Norwegians were quite ready to believe reports that on September 25, the anniversary of his assumption of power two years ago, Quisling would assemble and launch a new governmental body, a Norwegian Riksting. Such a body might give him a new leverage with which to force his fellow countrymen under Hitler's yoke.

The plan was to assemble a Riksting ("Assembly of the Realm") made up of representatives of the various trade and professional groups, now mostly controlled by Quisling's men. This corporative parliament would take the place of the old Storting, which, with its party system and geographical representation, passed from the scene in 1940. The first move came on September 2, when Quisling promulgated a law giving the state the right to regulate organizations.1/ The law was applied quite specifically to labor unions and to employer's associations.2/ Continuance of membership in these organisations was made compulsory. Corporate dissolutions and individual resignations were held to be illegal. Dues were to be paid like taxes; for the workers, this meant they were deductible from wages. Violation of these regulations would entail a maximum of three years' imprisonment. With labor unions and professional groups thus brought into line, it would be possible to elect on a corporative basis a Riksting. This body might then give Quisling's power a stabler basis than Nazi bayonets on which to rest.

Ever since his accession to power two years ago, Quisling has striven to coordinate the professional and organized groups in order to present his German masters with some evidence that he is entitled to speak for an important bloc of Norwegian opinion. His assumption of the new office of Minister President on February 1, 1942, was a move in that direction. Quisling

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1/ News of Norway, September 25, 1942.

2/ Aftontidningen, September 11, 1942

Torboven may be eager to expand his own power as a sort of viceroy, and could thus do very well without Quisling. The latter's difficulties with members of his own party over their recruitment for military service on the Russian front may be not unwelcome to the German authorities. The latter would not hesitate to liquidate Quisling and his Nasjonal Samling if they decided it would be advantageous. Certainly, the recent visit to Norway of Wilhelm Stuckart, in charge of the Zentral Stelle fur Norwegen in the Ministry of Interior at Berlin, might bode no good. Stuckart, holding a similar office for Austria, had charge in 1938 of much of the detailed work of incorporating that country into the Reich.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Germans have good reason now to watch the ideological front in the Scandinavian North. That front has a bearing on Germany's ability to interfere with the northern convoy route. The nature of the front, however, varies from country to country. In Denmark, where a considerable range of autonomy is left, the issue of the season is sabotage and how to get the Danish government to deal vigorously enough with it. Norway, in some respects, presents an opposite problem. There, Nazi lackeys are in control and the German authorities are disinclined to face fresh troubles with the civilian population. Hence, they find it advisable to put a brake upon the zeal of the Quislingites. The recent return of veterans from the eastern front does not improve matters. Quisling survivors of the Nordland regiment are demanding important party posts, while returning members of the Fricorps Danmark have been greeted with a withering disdain by the loyal home front in Copenhagen.

In Sweden, which is still formally neutral, the problem is to hold democratic and Allied sympathies in check, and, so far as possible, to keep them inarticulate. In this contest the Nazis have lost a battle, as the recent Swedish elections show. Moreover, they may be on the verge of losing another of much larger dimensions in Finland. In their present extremity, the Finns cannot help but be influenced by the attitude of their neighbors to the west. Many Finns must be wondering about the sharp increase in the Swedish Communist vote. When Minister Procope, without special occasion for doing so, reiterates the claim that Finland's war objectives are strictly limited, and when the Finnish press anxiously inquires what Washington thinks of its country's position, Hitler may have reas on to be concered over such vacillation. If the ideological front should crumble for him in Finland, the military picture as well would soon change. The Germans might then face new difficulties in Denmark and Norway -- difficulties which could seriously interfere with their efforts to disrupt the northern Allied convoy route.

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